State agency donates for mural project

Local artist Yermo Aranda has been awarded a $15,000 matching grant by the California Arts Council for a nine-month mural project involving "high-risk" youth.

Aranda and his youthful crews have already painted six murals in Santa Cruz County. The most recent project, which contains a large, purple eagle, can be seen from Highway 1 and was done with the help of about 30 children from the Villa San Carlos housing project on Soquel Drive in Live Oak. Aranda has worked as a visual artist, a dancer and an art teacher for youth for many years in Watsonville.

Several local agencies have expressed interest in providing the other half of the grant, Aranda said. He expects to get final word within a week.

But the local match is only the first hurdle. Aranda said he's also looking for a place that he and the young artists can use for a studio and for the art classes that will be part of the project. Aranda is hoping someone will donate a place, or charge a minimal amount of rent. He said he'd prefer to be in downtown Watsonville or along Freedom Boulevard and estimates that he needs between 1,200 and 1,500 square feet. The place needs to be able to be secured and accessible seven days a week.

Aranda can be reached by calling 728-5460.